



FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH COMMUNION PARTICIPATION MISSION

IN OUR OWN WORDS

Four members of our parish family participated in the gathering at the Public Auditorium on June 11th: Charlotte Brown, Margarete Smith, Rosalind Whatley, and Erin Whatley. Each one of them has written a short reflection based on their experience and impression of the day-long gathering. Those reflections will be shared here in our bulletin over the next few weeks. Today's reflection is written by Charlotte Brown.

The top 10 priorities from the listening session were provided as three themes: Communion (diverse people of one faith), Participation (call for involvement by the people of God), and Mission (The Church exists to evangelize). Delegates at each table were given the opportunity to review the details of the 10 priorities, presented as bullet points, in each of the 3 themes as a listening session. Groups of tables were assigned one of the three themes, then given the opportunity to share a brief summary of their listening session with everyone in attendance.

The panelists shared their experiences of church and suggested social media to engage our youth. Reach out to the elders and shut-in and be inclusive towards immigrants. Conduct night prayer. Say yes to what people want and be open to new ways of building the church.

The most profound message for me was to be Catholic unapologetically. We are called to testify to the Gospel. We cannot continue offering programs without one-on-one dialogue with the people we serve. Our "style of God" should be closeness, mercy, and accompaniment.

It was comforting to know that all the parishes were having the same issues and concerns that we are having at Holy Spirit: youth participation and engagement, collaboration with others, outreach in the community and the Catholic church image, to name a few.

I was somewhat disheartened, but not surprised that the diocese did not have anyone in the African American community in the planning, presenting, or on the panel to offer their gifts at any of the day-long events. My final impression was that the diocese reversed the ownership of the church growth to the parish level because "the church is the people not the leadership."

